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Message Text

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70
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 EB-07

ACDA-05 SAJ-01 IO-10 /081 W
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R 181622Z JUL 75
FM USMISSION USBERLLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1187
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

C O N F I D E N T I A L USBERLIN 1406

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, WB, US, UK, FR, UR, GW, GE
SUBJECT: ACCESS RIGHTS FOR FREIGHT TRAINS TO BERLIN

REF: STATE 166991

1. CONSULTATIONS BETWEEN ALLIES AND WITH SENAT ON FREIGHT TRAIN SUBSIDY ISSUE HAVE BEEN UNDERWAY FOR SOME DAYS. WITHIN SENAT, CHANCELLERY AND SENATOR FOR ECONOMICS ARE EXPRESSING THEIR CONCERN AT POSSIBLE EFFECT ON ACCESS RIGHTS FOR TRAINS. CHAMBER OF INDUSTRY AND COMMERCE AND BUNDESBAHN HAVE ALSO WEIGHED IN AGAINST PROPOSED SUBSIDY CUT.

2. THERE IS SOME DISAGREEMENT AS TO POSSIBLE EFFECT ON TRAIN RIGHTS OF REIBSCHLAEGER PROPOSAL. QUOTA OF THIRTEEN DAILY FREIGHT TRAINS AUTHORIZED BY 1945 FOUR-POWER AGREEMENT IS SELDOM USED. THE NUMBER USED VARIES GREATLY DEPENDING IN PART ON SEASONAL NEED FOR COAL AND HAS SOMETIMES BEEN AS FEW AS TWO DAILY, ALTHOUGH THE AVERAGE IS CLOSER TO SIX. TRAINS CARRY MIXED CARGO OF COAL AND OTHER FREIGHT BUT GREAT BULK OF FREIGHT LOADS IS COAL. IMPORTANTLY, HOWEVER,ALL THIRTEEN TRAINS ARE SHOWN ON REICHSBAHN/BUNDESBAHN DAILY TIMETABLE. THOSE WHICH DO NOT RUN ARE CANCELLED WITHIN A PRESCRIBED PERIOD. FULL OR PARTICAL TRANSFER OF COAL TRAFFIC TO BARGE WOULD CLEARLY REDUCE STILL FURTHER NUMBER
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OF TRAINS USED DAILY. ONE LINE OF ARGUMENT RUNS THAT THE RIGHT

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TO RUN THESE TRAINS WOULD REMAIN UNAFFECTED AS LONG AS THE TRAINS CONTINUED TO BE LISTED IN TIMETABLES AND CANCELLED AS IS PRESENT PRACTICE.

3. THERE IS ALSO SHARP DISAGREEMENT ON PRACTICALITY OF SHIFT TO BARGE TRAFFIC AND FOR THAT MATTER ON AMOUNT THAT WILL BE SAVED BY PROPOSAL. FOR TECHNICAL REASONS, IT MIGHT PROVE DIFFICULT TO SWIFTLY REVERT TO RAIL TRANSPORT OF COAL WHEN FACED WITH INTERRUPTIONS TO BARGE TRAFFIC DUE TO LOW WATER OR ICE CONDITIONS. FURTHER, DUE TO LIKELIHOOD OF PERIODIC INCREASED COSTS DURING LOW WATER FOR BARGE TRANSPORT (GREATLY REDUCED CARGO CAPACITY) AND NEED FOR CONSIDERABLE NEW HANDLING EQUIPMENT, REAL SAVINGS FROM CUT IN SUBSIDIES IN OPINION OF SOME TRANSIT EXPERTS MIGHT BE FAR LESS THAN HALF OF SENATOR REIBSCHLAEGER'S ESTIMATE.

4. THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME TACTICAL ADVANTAGE IN ALLOWING THE LINES OF ARGUMENT TO BE CLARIFIED AND THE OPPOSITION TO THE PROPOSAL TO GAIN MOMENTUM AT THIS STAGE. THE ALLIES WILL IN ANY CASE HAVE FINAL SAY AND ARE FOLLOWING MATTER CLOSELY. GEORGE

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